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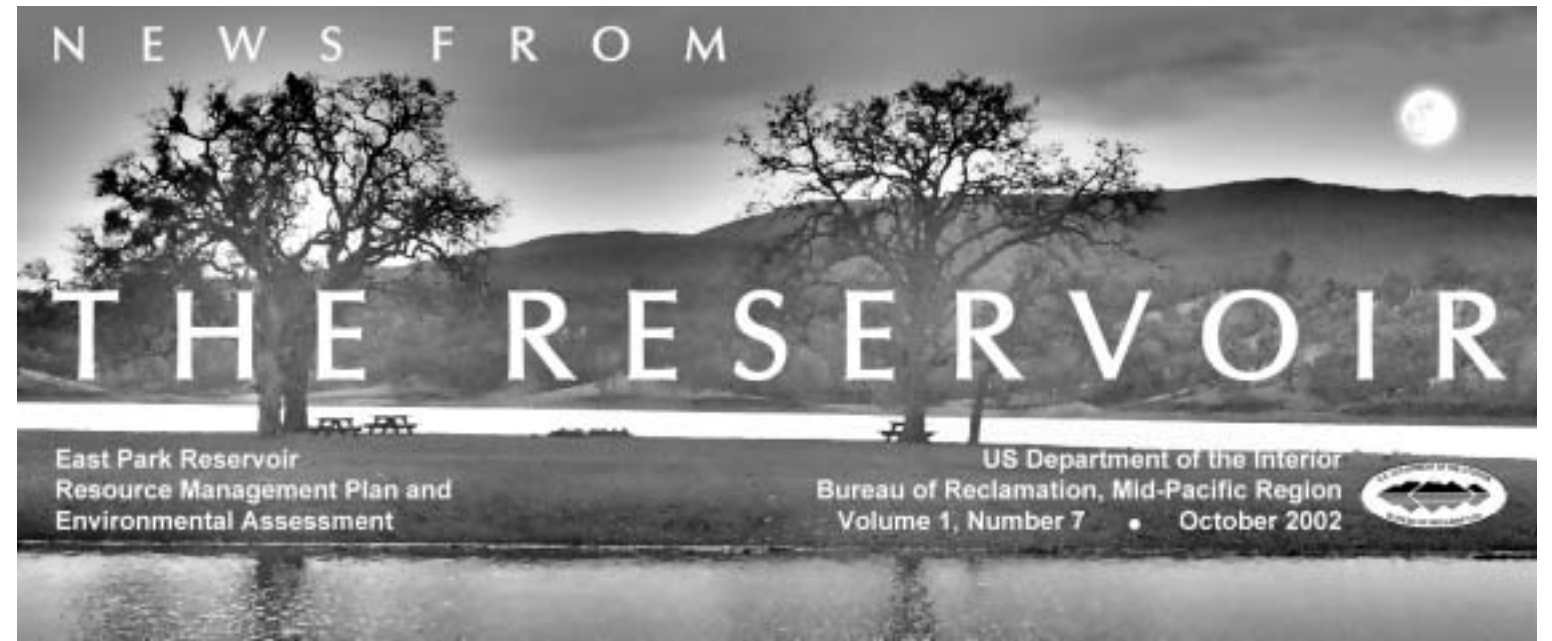
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*Acting as contracted agent for the Bureau of Reclamation, Mid-Pacific Region



NEWS FLASH!

The next Work Group meeting is on Thursday, October 24, 2002, from 6 to 8 PM at the Maxwell Inn.



Reclamation Hosts Public Open House #1

On August 15, 2002, the Bureau of Reclamation held the first of two public open houses at the Maxwell Inn.

The purpose of this event was to educate those not familiar with the East Park Resource Management Plan and Environmental Assessment, to get input from those interested in East Park, and to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act's public involvement criteria.

The open house was held between 5:00 PM and 8:00 PM, and the discussion of issues affecting East Park were varied. Many attendees commented on the low water levels this summer at East Park, and some noted that the low water levels were a bigger issue than recreation at East Park. Basia Trout of Reclamation reminded those in attendance that it had been a relatively dry water year and that the Orland Unit Water Users' Association (OUWUA) controls the reservoir's water levels. During the irrigation season, OUWUA provides daily water release orders to the Army Corps of Engineers for

releasing Reclamation's Central Valley Project water out of Black Butte Reservoir. This exchange agreement enables Black

Butte water to be used first, for repayment later in the season, thereby delaying the release of water in East Park and Stony Gorge. When Reclamation needs to deliver water to its users later in the season, the OUWUA releases this exchanged water in East Park and Stony Gorge. (For complete details on the Orland Project, see the July issue of *News from the Reservoir*.)

There was also a discussion at the open house about testing the water at East Park, and some attendees reported that there used to be a water well in the area of the reservoir.

Copies of the draft recreation development proposal (RDP)—the third revision of the RDP—were available. Once all comments on the draft RDP have been received, Reclamation will issue a final RDP.

The next open house will follow the release of the public draft resource management plan and environmental assessment, most likely in February or March 2003.

Reclamation's Basia Trout and open house attendees discuss East Park issues.

The Minutes Corner

At this seventh workgroup meeting, the discussion first focused on a brief review of the goals and objectives, and then the group concentrated on developing alternatives for the RMP.

RMP Goals and Objectives Discussion

- *Discussion of Goal 5-1 on page 11, Bullet 2.* Glen Holsten, of the California Native Plant Society, pointed out that the objective stated that surveys would be done for listed species. He suggested that surveys be conducted for all sensitive species, as state rare plants and species of special concern are not included in the objective. None of the species in East Park are listed by the federal government as protected, but many are rare or sensitive. Glen thought it would be best to look at a broader range of species. Everyone agreed, and Dennis will update the goals and objectives accordingly.
- *Spring surveys.* Basia Trout, of the Bureau of Reclamation, stated that Reclamation would like to conduct surveys in spring 2003 for both plants and animals at East Park (budget pending) and that Reclamation would work with Glen on the possibility of coordinating some personnel to assist with the surveys.

NEPA and Alternatives Discussion

Dennis presented a review of NEPA and the alternatives selection process to give the group an understanding of why alternatives are needed for the RMP.

Dennis noted that it would be ideal to have three or four strong alternatives that were all somewhat different and then to apply the goals and objectives to each alternative. Through this process, it should become apparent which alternative would address more of the goals and objectives;

this would likely become the preferred alternative.

Dennis also pointed out that, in order to determine the number of people that could be supported under each possible alternative, it would be helpful to determine the carrying capacity of East Park. This would then enable the group to determine percentages of the carrying capacity that would be appropriate under each selected alternative.

- For example, if the carrying capacity of East Park were determined to be 5,000 people, then under an alternative focused on natural resource protection, the maximum number of visitors may be only 75 percent, or 3,750 visitors.
- Or, if an alternative were to have greater focus on recreational opportunities, the maximum number of visitors under the alternative may be 95 percent of the determined carrying capacity, or 4,750 visitors.

Meeting attendees and Reclamation agreed that the term *expansion* in the sample alternative descriptions should be replaced with *development*. Several people noted that it was not about expanding recreation at East Park but about controlling and managing the recreation that is already occurring, as well as capping the number of people permitted at East Park at any one time in order to protect the resources.

Sample alternatives discussed at this meeting are shown below.

Sample Alternative 1: Recreation Development Compatible with Increased Natural Resource Protection Emphasis

At East Park, such an alternative would allow for a limited amount of (expansion and) development of recreation sites and facilities and to increase efforts of protecting and managing natural and cultural resources on Reclamation's lands.

Discussion of Sample Alternative 1

- Allow limited recreational development. Someone asked if only half of the park is developed for recreation, will the other half still be mayhem. The response was that the number of people in the park must be limited.
- Limit use to existing facilities by using carrying capacity as a determining factor.
- Increase effort to limit crowds in all campground areas.
- Increase interpretive facilities and signage to better protect natural resources. Also, wetlands could be protected by posting speed limit signs and managing personal watercraft use.
- Encourage tourism and increase education by increasing the emphasis of the area's natural resources (e.g., unique bird area, nesting osprey, migrating birds, and spring flowers). By doing so, it would give people other reasons to come to East Park.
- Jack Horner, of the US Forest Service, suggested that one could determine the carrying capacity of East Park and develop only 40 to 60 percent of that.
- Track vehicles with a fee gate. If people have to register their license plates, it may alter their behavior. This would discourage troublemakers and limit crowds.
- Basia suggested referring to this alternative as Optimal Recreational Development and to Alternative 2 as Development for Maximum Carrying Capacity/Recreation.
- Proposed change to the title of the alternative, based on the discussion above: **Recreational Development Compatible with Increased Natural Resource Enhancement.**

Alternative Summary: Allow for limited development of facilities to provide established sites that meet the optimum determined carrying capacity. Primitive sites

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NEPA and Project Alternatives

Why does Reclamation need to look at various alternatives to the planned resource management plan? How many different ways are there to write a RMP anyway? How many alternatives does Reclamation need to develop?

Read on for a brief explanation of the NEPA alternatives development process.

Any time a federal agency undertakes a project, whether it is construction of a new facility (for example, a post office or visitors center) or the development of a management plan (such as this resource management plan) the agency must first complete a NEPA analysis. The alternatives section of a NEPA document is the heart of the environmental document, whether it is an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement. There is no set number of alternatives that should be analyzed in a NEPA document because the number of alternatives is often determined by several factors, including the scope of the project, how controversial the project is, and which agency is developing the project.

The goal behind developing project alternatives is to present the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project and the various alternatives in comparative form. For example, impacts to various resource areas, such as endangered species, air quality, noise, socioeconomics, traffic, land use, and geology would all be given equal analysis treatment for each alternative considered. If

done properly, the alternatives then help further define the issues for the project and provide a clear basis for the decision-maker and the public to choose the most appropriate options.

In the alternatives process, all agencies are required to adhere to the following:

- Rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives, and, for alternatives that were eliminated from detailed study, briefly discuss the reasons for their having been eliminated;
- Devote substantial treatment to each alternative considered in detail, including the proposed action so that reviewers may evaluate their comparative merits;
- Include reasonable alternatives not within the jurisdiction of the lead agency and include the no action alternative;
- Identify the agency's preferred alternative or alternatives; and
- Include appropriate mitigation measures not already included in the proposed action or alternatives.

In summary, agencies must look at all reasonable alternatives, but only those alternatives that are feasible and will meet the project's purpose and need.

For more on the NEPA process, log onto: http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm. 🐦

Reservoir Gate Repair Update

During the 1997 drought year, Reclamation's Safety of Dams team and the Orland Unit Water Users Association discovered damage to the gates. On October 7, 2002, the OUWUA stopped releases at East Park to make repairs to the dam. This year OUWUA took advantage of the low water levels from lower than normal rainfall and further reduced the lake levels so they could analyze and repair the leaks.

The low water levels are required to expose the gates and to repair the damage.

The repairs consist of replacing the seals in the north gate and repairing the gate stems on the western outlet gates. The repairs are expected to take two weeks, and the reservoir level will not be lowered beyond 5,900 acre-feet.

Following the repair work, minimum releases will be attempted, and the goal will be to refill the reservoir with winter rains.

For more information please contact Rick Massa, OUWUA manager, at (530) 865-4126. 🐦

The Minutes Corner

(Continued from page 2)

and the natural resources would be enhanced, while limiting entry to the park to the determined carrying capacity.

Sample Alternative 2: Balanced Recreation Development and Natural Resources Emphasis

At East Park, this alternative would allow for a balanced amount of (expansion and) development of recreation sites and facilities. Several selected natural and cultural resources protection and management efforts would be increased.

Discussion of Sample Alternative 2

- Develop East Park for maximum or close to maximum carrying capacity.
- This alternative would meet the recreational demand.
- Meet natural resource protection goals and increase resource protection.
- Dennis pointed out that if the focus on recreation were increased under this alternative, there would need to be countermeasures (mitigations) to protect the natural resources.
- Control trails and paths to wetlands by limiting access to certain times of year, or rope off certain areas supporting sensitive species or habitat.
- Increased fees generated from more visitors would mean more money for natural resources support and protection, as well as for the local economy. However, an increase in visitors would also require a larger budget for more personnel and management at East Park.
- Proposed change to the title of the alternative based on the discussion above: **Recreational Development Balanced with Natural Resource Protection.**

Alternative Summary: Allow for development of facilities to meet recreational demand and provide established sites that meet the maximum determined carrying capacity. Protection and enhancement of the natural resources would be pursued. 🐦